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CU Poll Shows Political Apathy Among Students

By **MARYLENA MANTAS**
Spectator Staff Writer

A Spectator poll of 120 University students reveals that only 54 percent plan to vote in the November general elections. Many students also expressed the opinion that student interest has shifted away from the politics that ruled and characterized Columbia's campus in the 1960s and '70s.

"Politics are no longer our concern. Young people today have other issues, such as AIDS, drugs, and academic pressure to worry about," one School of Engineering and Applied Science (SEAS) sophomore said.

According to the majority of polled students, 54 percent, most Columbia students appear to be rather apathetic when it comes to politics.

"There is a small group of dedicated students on both sides of the political spectrum that are very active in politics and work on campaigns," President of the College Republicans George Demos, CC '99, said.

Patricia Larios, CC '01, agreed with Demos. "Aside from students who take particular interest in politics because of their majors, I think most students on this campus do not care about politics" she said. "I rarely hear students discuss anything political, other than big events, such as the Clinton thing."

Approximately 42 percent said they definitely would not vote, while another approximate three percent was not sure.

In terms of party affiliations, about 44 percent of polled students consider themselves Democrats, 17.5 percent Republicans, and 38.3 percent did not identify with either party.

A number of polled students commented that students tend to show greater interest in international, as opposed to local, politics.

"I definitely think that everyone pays attention to what is going on, but I don't think [students] take an enormous interest in local politics," J.B. Friedman, CC '99,

said.

Friedman said international politics may be more interesting to students because of the diverse geographic background of the Columbia student body.

“This [a lack of great interest in local politics] is to be expected when you have a campus where most students aren’t from New York,” he said. “But I think people do know the major players in local politics, such as the Guilianis, but they don’t pay attention to specifics.”